R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 017 334 PS 000 450

A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MOTHERS.

BY- HORTON, DELLA M.
GEORGE PEABODY COLL. FOR TEACHERS, NASHVILLE, TENN

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 5P.

DESCRIPTORS- *TRAINING OBJECTIVES, TRAINING TECHNIQUES, PARENT PARTICIPATION, *MOTHERS, *PARENT SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP, CHILD DEVELOPMENT, OBSERVATION, DEMONSTRATIONS (EDUCATIONAL), ROLE PLAYING, *TEACHER AIDES, *PRESCHOOL EDUCATION,

FOUR OBJECTIVES WERE DESCRIBED AS PART OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR MOTHERS. STEP 1 WAS TO ESTABLISH PARENTAL COOPERATION EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD. STEP 2 WAS TO ERASE SOME OF THE TENSION, FEAR, AND FRUSTRATION THAT WAS AROUSED WHEN MOTHERS KNEW THEY WOULD BE TESTED BEFORE THE PROGRAM WAS UNDER WAY. STEP 3 WAS TO GIVE MOTHERS AN OVERALL VIEW OF THE VARIABLES PERCEPTUAL AND CONCEPTUAL, AS WELL AS ATTITUDINAL DEVELOPMENT IN PERSISTENCE, TOLERANCE AND DELAY OF GRATIFICATION. STEP 4 WAS TO HELP MOTHERS UNDERSTAND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN AS THE PROCESS OF A SERIES OF SYSTEMATIC EXPERIENCES BEING LINKED TOGETHER TO FORM A COMPLETE PATTERN OF SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING. PHASE 1 OF THE PROGRAM IN THE CLASSROOM CONSISTED OF ORIENTATION AND DIRECTED OBSERVATION. PHASE 2 CONSISTED OF DEMONSTRATION AND ROLE PLAY. PHASE 3 CONSISTED OF CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION WITH MINIMAL STRUCTURE. PHASE 4 CONSISTED OF INSTRUCTIONAL PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM. THESE 4 PHASES OF INVOLVEMENT BEGAN TO YIELD IMMEDIATE RESULTS. THE MOTHERS BEGAN TO BE CURIOUS AND TO ASK QUESTIONS. THE DATA FROM THE RESEARCH INDICATED THAT SUCH A PROGRAM CAN HAVE A MARKED EFFECT UPON THE MOTHERS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS. FOR EXAMPLE, SEVERAL MOTHERS RETURNED TO SCHOOL. ALSO, SEVERAL FAMILIES PLANNED TO LEAVE FEDERAL HOUSING TO BUY THEIR OWN HOMES. (CO)

ED017334

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

A Training Program for Mothers

Demonstration and Research Center for Early Education
George Peabody College for Teachers
Della M. Horton

The training program for mothers is described in the following phases: (1) Orientation and directed observation; (2) Demonstration and role play; (3) Classroom participation with minimal structure; and (4) Classroom participation, instructional.

Objectives and Procedure

The first step of the intervention program was to establish parental cooperation explaining the need for interaction between mother and child. The second step was to erase some of the tension, fear, and frustration that was aroused when mothers knew they would be tested as well as the children before the program was under way. Third, to give mothers an over-all view of the variables perceptual, conceptual, and language development as well as attitudinal development in persistence, tolerance and delay of gratification which were a part of the classroom program for the children. Fourth, to help mothers understand the development of their children as the process of a series of systematic experiences being linked together to form a complete pattern of skills and understanding. Since the parents had little knowledge of their potential influence in their child's development, it seemed feasible to explain the things they should know, by using the classroom teachers and children for illustrations.

The mothers were introduced to each other and were given the names of each teacher and group member. We began our work of orientation by pointing out the different phases of classroom activity trying to point out the ends-means relationships that were emerging in these initial classroom days.

Because children, and mothers as well, had been accustomed to doing things, when and if they wanted, the period of adjustment was explained as the time when children must be atuned to a new routine and the attitudes necessary to make the change, so that children could develop the necessary skills for listening, observing, following directions, associating, organizing their thoughts, and then verbalizing them. Parents were encouraged to observe the techniques and positive reinforcements being given by the teacher to motivate the children to want to participate, to want to develop self-control, to want to share, and to want to work as a group as well as develop a positive image of themselves.

During this period, parents were looking primarily at their own children, but were encouraged to look at the entire group with concentration on minute improvements rather than looking at negative behaviors. Also mothers were told step-by-step why the teacher had scheduled activities. This was done in an effort to show the mother that forming good habits will help the child adjust to routine, that his attitude of tolerance and persistence

PS 000450

might be developed while developing other skills. They were also told why the teachers were giving M&M candy to all children for any positive effort. This was being done to develop in the child a sense of belonging as well as a sense of achievement, and to stimulate the children to want to follow the directions of the role model while developing a sense of direction.

At home the practice in contrast was, if rewards were given, they were given as a bribe for types of behavior the parents wanted. The child was seldom rewarded for self-initiated behavior. The mother usually gave the child something for being quiet or sitting down or leaving her alone while she was doing something else. Parents were told why teachers were using statements such as "Let's put on our listening ears," or "Let's button our lips," or even ringing a small bell to get attention. These were done to encourage the children to listen. The teachers were rewarding the children to get them to sense achievement and to also encourage them to respond. At the same time, parents were being rewarded for listening and for appropriate evaluative comments made about activities in the classroom.

In order to impress upon the mothers the importance of order and organization in the child's environment, attention was brought to the bareness of the classroom. Too many things, whether games, toys, furniture, or what have you, can confuse, frustrate, and lessen the chances of the child to concentrate; therefore, materials were introduced and brought in gradually.

The Lead Teacher introduced the activities during large group and small group teachers followed through in small group activities attempting to build the same skills with fewer children. Using the teachers as role models, the mothers were told that they, too, could follow through at home in the same manner. The mothers began to observe the children sitting for longer periods listening and following direction and to understand that positive reinforcement can motivate the kind of responses that are necessary for skill building and learning. As they watched their children grow, they, too, began to listen more attentively as well as to solidify their efforts to work as a group. They began to ask for their M&M's or recognition before it could be given them. In addition to entering into group discussions, the parents at this time had begun to look at other children rather than their own, and to point out the progress that was being made in all children.

During the second phase of the program, while observation continued, we began to have meetings in the conference room. Here the parents were exposed to many perceptual materials and shown how a simple puzzle may be used for many learning activities, such as counting shapes, color, size, position, ordinal position, as well as to develop language. They were also given suggestions of things found in the home that could be adapted to learning while working with their other children. Appropriate stories were used as follow-up of class activities. All activities were explored to the fullest extent for desired concepts to be developed. By this time the learning situation had become so much a part of the mothers that they organized a parent's club designed to share experiences they found helpful while working at home and the creative materials that they developed. As

suggested, activities in the conference room were follow-up of units being followed in the classroom. Discussions included self-expression in describing activities and how they may be used at home through introduction of stories and nursery rhymes.

An example of conference room activities is an activity entitled "Who Ever Saw." This was used to demonstrate to the mothers how to develop skills in numbers, numerals, sets, colors, counting, association, and how to encourage or motivate curiosity in the child, to denote action, to listen for sounds as well as to develop language both in articulation and speaking in complete sentences. While the child was the focus of discussion, the mother's skills and abilities were being improved. This story was also recorded as one of the mothers dramatized the way she had presented it to her children at home.

To encourage the children to talk and to think, parents were asked to ask their children such questions as "Why do we wash our hands before we eat?" or "Why are there parking rules?" or "Why do we cook food?", etc. Not only did we read stories and sing songs in the conference room, but we did a lot of dramatizing and pretending followed by questions, answers, and rewards. Our songs and finger plays were interesting. For instance, "Where is Thumbkin?" a finger counting game for recognizing, associating, language, coordination, and control, was a favorite. There were many, many other activities that could be described which were used to build the mother's repertoire.

We also went on field trips with and without the class. The purposes for the mothers going on field trips were two-fold: to illustrate to mothers how such outings could benefit the entire family, and also to provide models of ways in which she could exploit such a trip. For instance, the airport trip was a follow-up on the children's unit "Things That Go" and it was the parent's first step in direct contact with all the children in a learning situation. Here, we were working or developing skills of size, shapes, counting, etc. One mother asked a child to put on his listening ears. The child replied, "I am sorry, but I left them at school." The mother quickly answered, "Let's see if we can't find some more." She said, "Oh, yes, here are some in my pocket." Immediately she pretended she was giving the child the listening ears and they began counting telephone booths as she had started in the beginning. This was quite an exciting experience because we were all eager to see what kind of response the parent was going to give. The child was immediately rewarded by the mother with a hug for putting on his ears and counting the six telephone booths.

Our field trips extended to the fire station, music store, farm, pet shop, library, museum, park and supermarket.

Such involvement began to yield immediate results. The mothers began to be curious and to ask questions: "What makes a kernel of popcorn pop?" Our response to that was, "Let's find out." Therefore, we had to take another trip to the library to do some research. Of course, we came up with the answer, "the heat transforms the moisture inside the kernel into steam. The force of the steam burst the kernel open."

Another question was asked, "What is the difference between white and black pepper?" And, while at the library we looked this up, too. Still another good question was asked, "Has coffee always been the favorite drink in America?" which is a fourth grade social studies question. We found the answer to this question, also, but something else happened. All mothers are now members of the library and are actively using this valuable community resource. The demonstration and role play phase generated a great deal of material preparation for home use. We encouraged this activity by providing construction materials and suggesting sources where they might find free and inexpensive materials. Mothers have made televisions, furniture sets for the presentation of stories to their children such as dramatization of the story, "The Three Bears." They have also made stuffed animals, puzzles, lotto games and many, many other creative devices to share with each other. One mother is now having a story hour for the neighborhood children.

In preparation for the third phase, classroom participation, all mothers were asked to take a critical look at the small group teacher and her group of children and to evaluate a morning's activity, during small group and large group activities as well. Our first formal step in the classroom was at the snack period at which time the lead teacher introduced the mothers to the small group teacher and her group, not as mothers, but as assistant teachers. Here the mother had to establish rapport but at a time when the group was involved with a self-reinforcing activity. Control problems for the mother were at a minimum and she could concentrate on using the situation to work on skill development with the children. The mothers experienced success rather easily and were eager for the next step involving large group activity. Here the mothers were developing skills in group control; while the instructional lesson is the lead teacher's responsibility, the mother must also be attentive to the lead teacher to help direct the group's attention as the lesson progresses. From the large group activity we move into a child selected activity. During this period the mother assumes full responsibility for one activity. Even though this is not a teacher's formally planned period, the mother must keep in mind the skills being taught and motivate the children by asking questions and communicating with them while they are with her.

Of the twenty mothers, there are seventeen now in the classroom. Two are working with selected activities, eleven are working through snack and large group activity and four are in the classroom for snack only. Our next step will be one of making structured lesson plans in preparation for going into the classroom as permanent assistants.

We have attempted to make the mothers aware of the potential learning resources available to them in the home. Constant and self conscious efforts have been made to broaden the mothers' horizons in the belief that they will be able to use their emerging awareness of society's advantages for their children's development.

An example of a home experience adapted as a follow-up of concepts being developed in the classroom had its setting when mother was preparing an evening meal. The mother suggests playing a game to see "Who can remember" and "Who can tell,"

says, "Everyone will get a chance to answer. Now let's put on our listening ears and looking glasses and thinking caps." Then mother says, "Now I'm going to be the leader and when I ask a question, I will begin with the one on my left." She calls the child's name, and moves around to the right. "Are you ready? Then, let's go. What piece of furniture is closest to the sink? Or is next to the sink? What is directly over the sink? Can you find three things that are exactly alike? How do you know what I am cooking for dinner since you can't see it? If you're not using your eyes, you must be using your _____." And she continues this game on and on. We have worked with positions of left and right, or directions to the left and to the right, next to, over, under, number sets, likeness and the sense of smell or being able to detect what is being cooked without seeing it. In such a setting our mothers have found all learning is not gained from the printed page, that we must develop the sense of looking and seeing what is around us.

The data from the research indicates that such a program can have a marked effect upon the mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Over the initial seven month contact period the average WAIS-IQ gain was 6 points. Similar gains are expected in other areas that we are studying.

Perhaps the most exciting changes we see, however, will not be reflected in psychometric measures.

One of these unobstrusive measures might be the number of mothers who have retumed to school or are obtaining a new training. Seven of our mothers have made such steps. Another might be the upward mobility that has begun to be shown. Several of our families want to leave federal housing and buy their own homes. While we cannot take credit for such motivational changes directly, we believe a self-help program designed to develop skills can have a profound impact on families from disadvantaged backgrounds.